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RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI IMMEDIATE 0820
RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY IMMEDIATE 0691
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 001274

SIPDIS

STATE PASS USTR FOR STRATFORD, ALTBACH, AND O'CONNOR
PASS TO USDA FOR FAS/OSTA BLUM, BEAN AND DAWSON; FAS/OCRA
RADLER, POOL; AND FAS/OFSO SALLYARDS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/30/2019
TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAGR](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MA ADMINISTRATION "VERY GLOOMY" OVER U.S.-TAIWAN
BEEF AGREEMENT

REF: TAIPEI 1270

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Classified By: Director Stanton. Reasons: 1.4 b/d

11. (C) Summary: National Security Council Secretary General Su Chi told the Director on October 30 that widespread public criticism of the recently signed U.S.-Taiwan protocol left him feeling very pessimistic about its prospects. He cited opposition from lawmakers who could derail the pact as particularly worrisome. Su said President Ma Ying-jeou planned to meet with top advisers later in the day to reassess the situation. In the meantime, the administration would continue to strenuously lobby ruling Kuomintang lawmakers who opposed the agreement. In response to the Director's question on what the United States could do to help, Su urged us to keep a low profile for now. End summary.

GLOOMY ASSESSMENT

12. (C) In an October 30 meeting immediately following the Vermont Governor's call on President Ma, which the Director also attended, National Security Council Secretary General Su Chi told the Director an "irrational" public response to the U.S.-Taiwan beef accord left him feeling "very, very gloomy" over its future. He did not, however, raise the prospect of delaying implementation beyond the agreed upon date of November 2. Su said President Ma was very worried as well and would call a meeting later in the day with key advisers to plot his administration's next moves. He added that the controversy was being fanned by the media, which he said gave voice to irrational fears over the safety of U.S. beef products, especially offal and ground beef, that would return to the Taiwan market under the accord. His deputy, Ho Szu-Yin, cited media reports of a university student who had eaten a cow-patty burger in protest as a sign of how irrational the debate had become. Su expressed frustration that media were not running op-ed pieces submitted by government experts rebutting claims U.S. beef products were

unsafe. Shaking his head, he said, "Sad, very sad." Although there had been no mass protests against the accord as of October 30, Ho said public polling showed that Ma's overall popularity had taken a major hit over the beef controversy, tumbling from 47 percent to 33 percent in one poll.

LEGISLATIVE YUAN ASSESSMENT

13. (C) Su and Ho expressed particular concern over opposition to the pact within the Legislative Yuan, and especially among KMT lawmakers. Of the 109 legislators, Ho said all 28 from the opposition Democratic Progressive Party and up to 25 from the ruling Kuomintang were strongly against the pact. Another five non-affiliated lawmakers represented rural districts where opposition to the accord was believed to be strong. Su said two proposals were circulating among lawmakers, one a resolution opposing the beef pact and another an amendment to Taiwan's law governing import regulations that would prohibit the import of beef offal and ground beef.

14. (C) Ho told the Director in a separate meeting he saw no way of getting around the Legislative Yuan. He said the Legislative Yuan had 30 days to accept, reject or propose changes to international agreements. He said the President's low poll numbers made issuing an executive order that would bypass the legislature an unattractive option. In any event, the Legislative Yuan would still have the power to change the law in a way that would undermine any executive order. (Note: AIT is checking the basis for Ho's comment on Legislative Yuan involvement. The Taiwan side during many months of

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negotiations indicated the protocol would not require legislative approval. End note.)

OPTIONS FOR SALVAGING THE PACT

15. (C) In an effort to convince recalcitrant Kuomintang lawmakers to support the pact, the administration would have "another session of knocking heads," said Su. He also raised the possibility of organizing a fact-finding group of lawmakers from the Legislative Yuan's public health and foreign affairs committees to visit the United States to view slaughterhouses and inspection procedures. He said members from the Control Yuan, the private Consumer Protection Association, and highly regarded veterinarians also could participate. In response to a query from the Director about what the United States could do to help, Su urged us to lay low and "stay out of the picture" while the Ma administration reviewed its options.

COMMENT: WILL MA SHOW SPINE?

16. (C) The Director told Su he admired his political courage in publicly defending the beef protocol, which at times has led to vitriolic personal criticism. Su assured the Director the administration did not blame the U.S. Government for the controversy; he instead pinned the fault on government opponents who were fanning the flames with misleading and ignorant arguments over beef safety. Su promised to keep in close touch with the Director as the administration continued to assess the situation.

STANTON